

## Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9155

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0314

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, HO  
SUBJECT: NEW GOH OFFICIALS: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 0042, (B) TEGUCIGALPA 0134

1. FOLLOWING IS BIO INFORMATION ON CABINET LEVEL CHANGES  
REPORTED REFTELS:

A. MONECONOMY BENJAMIN VILLANUEVA TABORA WAS BORN [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 05 DEC 2014]  
IN SANTA ROSA DE COPAN. HE GRADUATED FROM THE PANAMERICAN  
AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL IN 1963, FOLLOWED BY A YEAR AT THE UNIVERSITY  
OF FLORIDA STUDYING ECONOMICS. VILLANUEVA STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY  
OF WISCONSIN (1964-1968) AND OBTAINED A MASTER'S DEGREE IN  
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND A DOCTORATE IN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HIS WIFE IS A U.S. CITIZEN  
(PENNY LU NEE WINKLER) AND THE COUPLE HAVE FOUR CHILDREN.  
VILLANUEVA HAS TRAVELLED EXTENSIVELY TO VENEZUELA ON PETROLEUM  
MATTERS, THROUGHOUT CENTRAL AMERICA ON COMMON MARKET PROBLEMS,  
AND TO EUROPE ON BANANA AND OTHER ECONOMIC MISSIONS. HE HAS  
BEEN AN ADVISER TO THE MINECONOMY (1973) AND HONDURAS  
REPRESENTATIVE (1974) ON THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSION OF THE  
CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET. PRIOR TO ASSUMING HIS NEW  
POSITION, HE WAS FOR TWO YEARS PRESIDENT OF THE HONDURAN BANANA  
CORPORATION (COHBANA). EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH HIM HAVE BEEN  
FRIENDLY EVEN THOUGH HE SOMETIMES APPEARS  
TO RESENT THE U.S.'S LARGE ROLE IN HONDURAS' ECONOMY.  
ALTHOUGH NOT KNOWN TO BE A MEMBER OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY,  
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VILLANUEVA IS AMBITIOUS. NEVERTHELESS, EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO  
KNOW HIM CONSIDER THAT HE IS PRIMARILY AN ECONOMIST AND A  
MANAGER OF HIGH COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY.  
B. MINCULTURE, TOURISM AND INFORMATION LT. COL. ERICK  
(AKA ERIN) O'CONNOR BAIN WAS BORN [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 05 DEC 2014] IN  
SAN SALVAODR. O'CONNOR GRADUATED FROM THE HONDURAN MILITARY  
ACADEMY IN 1960 AND HAS HELD ASSIGNMENTS INCLUDING COMPANY

COMMANDER (1968-1969), EXECUTIVE OFFICER, 4TH MILITARY ZONE (1972) AND COMMANDER OF THE 7TH INFANTRY BATTALION (1975-1976). O'CONNOR HAS STUDIED AT THE INFANTRY SCHOOL, FORT BENNING (1969-1970) AND COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE, FORT LEAVENWORTH (1973). HE WAS APPOINTED HEAD OF HONDURAS' FLEDGLING NAVY IN 1976. IN THAT POSITION, HE WAS HELPFUL TO THE EMBASSY ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS IN MATTERS RELATED TO NARCOTICS AND SEARCH AND RESCUE. UNDER HIS COMMAND, THE HONDURAN NAVY HAS SEEMED TO BE EFFECTIVELY GROWING. AS HIS NAME IMPLIES, O'CONNOR SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH. HE IS MARRIED TO REYNA E. VASQUEZ AND THE COUPLE HAVE TWO CHILDREN. O'CONNOR IS FRIENDLY TO THE U.S. ALTHOUGH WILLING TO CRITICIZE SOME ASPECTS OF U.S. POLICY. EMBASSY OFFICIALS WHO DEAL WITH HIM CONSIDER HIM TO BE PROFESSIONAL AND OPEN, AND HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY HIS INTEGRITY. HE ENJOYS A GOOD REPUTATION WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES AS A CAPABLE OFFICER AND GOOD ORGANIZER, AND THIS MAY ACCOUNT FOR HIS BEING CHOSEN TO BECOME THE NEW HEAD OF A MINISTRY WHOSE RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC HAD DETERIORATED. THE FIRST QUESTION PUT TO HIM BY THE PRESS CONCERNED HIS PLANS FOR IMPROVING THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC RELATIONS.

C. MINDEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE LT. COL. JUAN ANGEL ARIAS RODRIGUEZ WAS BORN [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 05 DEC 2014]. LIKE O'CONNOR, HE GRADUATED FROM THE HONDURAN MILITARY ACADEMY IN 1960. HIS MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS HAVE INCLUDED BEING SECRETARY TO THE GENERAL STAFF (1966-1968), EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE LOGISTICAL

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SUPPORT CENTER (1971-1973), ARMED FORCES G-1 (PERSONNEL 1973-1975), AND COMMANDER OF THE NATIONAL POLICE FORCE (FUSEP) FROM 1975 THROUGH 1977. HE IS MARRIED TO SHIRLEY AREVALO AND THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN. ARIAS HAS A REPUTATION AS A GOOD STAFF OFFICER AND COMMANDER, AND HAS BEEN HELPFUL AND FRIENDLY TO EMBASSY PERSONNEL. ALTHOUGH HE HAS EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH U.S. POLICY TOWARDS HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE DISPUTE AND U.S. ARMS TRANSFER POLICY, ARIAS IS CONSIDERED GENERALLY FRIENDLY TO THE U.S. ARIAS IS AN EXCELLENT PUBLIC SPEAKER AND AN ATTRACTIVE CONVERSATIONALIST. HIS APPOINTMENT TO THIS MINISTRY CAN BE CONSIDERED A LOGICAL STEP UP FROM THE POLICE. BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY,

AND AMBITION, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT ARIAS WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS.

D. MINDEFENSE LT. COL. FRANCISCO RUIZ ANDRADE IS ANOTHER GRADUATE OF THE 1960 CLASS AT THE HONDURAN MILITARY ACADEMY. RUIZ WAS BORN [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 05 DEC 2014] IN TEGUCIGALPA. BEFORE BEING NAMED TO BE MINDEF, HE WAS COMMANDER OF THE IMPORTANT 3RD INFANTRY BATTALION IN SAN PEDRO SULA. RUIZ IS MARRIED TO GLORIA ENRIQUE AND THE COUPLE HAVE FIVE CHILDREN. RUIZ HAS BEEN FRIENDLY TO THE EMBASSY AND HAS ON OCCASION EXPRESSED

HIS FEELINGS THAT THE U.S. IS NOT DOING ENOUGH TO PREVENT COMMUNISM IN THE HEMISPHERE. HE IS AMBITIOUS AND HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST OUTSPOKEN OFFICERS ON THE ARMED FORCES SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL (SDC). RUIZ IS APPARENTLY VIEWED BY SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES AS EITHER A BIT TOO "PROGRESSIVE" OR TOO AMBITIOUS, ACCOUNTING FOR HIS TRANSFER TO THE LARGELY ADMINISTRATIVE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. HE WAS ASKED BY THE PRESS IF HE FELT HE HAD BEEN PURGED (BY WHICH TERM THE PRESS WAS REFERRING TO THE ASSIGNMENT OF "PROGRESSIVE" OFFICERS AWAY FROM INFLUENTIAL COMMANDS), RUIZ POINTED OUT THAT HE WILL REMAIN ON THE SDC AS MINDEF.

2. CURRENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON ON VIRGILIO R. GALVEZ, NEW PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL CONFIDENTIAL

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TRIBUNAL, THOUGH HIS APPOINTMENT AS AMBASSADOR TO CHILE IN 1976, AND FORMER MINECONOMY AND NOW COHBANA PRESIDENT VICENTE DIAZ. INFORMATION ON NEW NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANK (BANAFOM) VICE PRESIDENT ROBERTO VALLADARES, SUB-SECRETARY OF COMMUNICATIONS LT. COL. ROLANDO MEJIA GARRIGO, AND SUB-SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT LT. COL. CRITOBAL DIAZ WILL BE FORWARDED AS AVAILABLE, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE SUB-SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE AND LABOR, WHEN THESE LAST TWO ARE NAMED.  
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